



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

February 2007

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PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the Columbus Area MPO Public Participation Plan is to explain to all transportation system stakeholders how they can participate in the transportation planning process. Stakeholders include first and foremost citizens, but also include other consultation and interested parties.

This plan explains how the MPO disseminates as well as receives information. The provision of information is the key enabling factor for active participation in the transportation planning process. Active participation is in keeping with the “cooperative” element of the federal 3C planning process. The three C’s stand for continuous, comprehensive and cooperative.

CONTACTING THE MPO

The MPO maintains an open door policy. Citizens who would like to express an opinion or have questions should feel free to contact the MPO staff at any time. There are many ways to contact the staff of the MPO and these are listed below.

ADDRESS

Do you have questions or concerns regarding the current state or future direction of our transportation system? Please feel free to visit the MPO staff in person. Appointments are not required, but due to the busy schedule of the staff making an appointment will help ensure that staff is available to meet with you.

The office of MPO staff is housed in Columbus City Hall located at the following address:

Columbus Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
123 Washington St
Columbus, IN 47203-6774

The MPO is located on the top floor of City Hall, ask for the MPO at the Office of the City Engineer or in the Mayors Office. The above address is also the correct address for sending mail to the MPO.

TELEPHONE & FAX

Another easy way to ask a question, provide input, or obtain information is by simply calling or faxing the staff of the MPO. Should you be greeted by an answering machine when you call, please leave your name and number and we will get back to you shortly.

Tel: (812) 376-2502

Fax: (812) 376-2643

EMAIL

The staff of the MPO can also be reached via email. Electronic mail enables the staff of the MPO to reply not only with a written answer but also enables the attachment of appropriate documents to the response you will receive. MPO staff can be reached via email at: kanderson@campo.in.gov

WWW CONTACT FORM

The MPO website features an email distribution list sign-up. We encourage anyone interested in transportation planning issues to sign up to be a part of this list. MPO staff uses this list to keep you informed of upcoming meetings as well as to send you information pertinent to the transportation planning process.

The distribution list sign up can be found at:

http://www.campo.in.gov/list_signup.php

DON'T WANT TO SPEAK WITH MPO STAFF?

If you are not satisfied with the answers from and discussions with MPO staff, then another option is to contact members of the MPO Policy Board. The Policy Board is the decision making arm of the MPO and values your opinion. The members of the MPO Policy Board can be found on page seven of this document or on the CAMPO webpage.

BACKGROUND

WHAT IS AN MPO?

MPO stands for Metropolitan Planning Organization. Each urbanized area in the United States with a population of 50,000 or more is required by the federal government to have a metropolitan planning organization (MPO). MPOs are responsible for the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process for their urbanized area.

Urbanized Areas are designated by the United States Census Bureau and are a reflection of urban growth, not political boundaries. For example, growth in the Indianapolis area has reached into the eight counties surrounding the City of Indianapolis. Therefore the Indianapolis Urbanized Area (as designated by the Census Bureau) includes multiple political entities, namely the City of Indianapolis / Marion County and parts of Boone, Hamilton, Madison, Hancock, Shelby, Johnson, Morgan and Hendricks County.

This is the reason why MPOs are responsible for the transportation planning process for urbanized areas and not single political entities. The Federal Government wants to ensure that the transportation planning process and resulting network are cohesive and functional for areas that have grown together. In other words, transportation planning needs to be regional in scope because transportation systems cut across governmental boundaries.

WHAT IS CAMPO?

CAMPO is short for Columbus Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. CAMPO is the MPO for the City of Columbus, Bartholomew County, Blue River Township in Johnson County, and Jackson County in Shelby County as designated by the Governor of Indiana on the 27th of February 2004. CAMPO is responsible for the continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process for the Columbus Metropolitan Planning Area.

CAMPO develops and implements the 25-year Transportation Plan (TP, a listing of all the transportation projects planned for the next 25 years), the three year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP, a listing of all transportation projects planned and funded for the next three to five years), and a yearly Statement of Work (SOW, a list of what activities the MPO will complete over the period of a year). CAMPO is further charged with the responsibility of planning activities which promote an efficient and effective intermodal transportation system. These planning topics include, but are not limited to transit, rail, highways, air quality, livable communities, and bicycle and pedestrian issues.

MPO STRUCTURE

The MPO consists of the three bodies:

- Policy Board
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Staff

MPO POLICY BOARD

The CAMPO Policy Board is the decision making body of the MPO. It is comprised of the following officials:

City of Columbus

- Mayor
- City Council President
- Plan Commission President

Bartholomew County

- County Council President
- Plan Commission President
- County Commissioners President

MPO TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is the technical arm of the MPO. It is a working group consisting of professional staff members from transportation stakeholders in the Columbus metropolitan planning area. The TAC is responsible for analyzing and reviewing transportation projects, reports, and issues with the purpose of making recommendations to the MPO Policy Board. The TAC is advisory in nature, not a decision making body. It is comprised of the following officials:

- Bartholomew County Engineer
- Columbus City Engineer
- Columbus Public Safety Director
- Columbus / Bartholomew Planning Director
- Columbus Regional Airport Director
- Columbus Transit Manager
- Columbus City Utilities Director
- Columbus / Bartholomew GIS Coordinator
- Bartholomew County School Corp Transportation Director
- INDOT Division of Environmental Planning and Engineering Representative

- INDOT Division of Program Development Representative
- INDOT Division of Budget and Fiscal Management Representative
- INDOT Division of Multimodal Transportation Representative
- INDOT Seymour District Representative
- Federal Highway Administration Field Operations Engineer
- Freight Carrier Representative

MPO STAFF

MPO staff consists of one full time person. Staff is responsible for all of the legwork to support the recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee and decisions of the Policy Board. This includes everything from the writing and preparation of plan documents and resolutions, scheduling of meetings, to things such as the CAMPO website. MPO staff is not a decision making body.

CITIZENRY

The MPO works for you, the citizen. The planning process affects the transportation network that your tax dollars pay and paid for. Therefore your input is very important to the planning process. This document is your roadmap to participating. Please do not be shy about voicing your opinion.

MPO CORE PRODUCTS

While there are multiple avenues to learn about transportation planning in the planning area of the MPO, it is important to keep in mind the two core products of the MPO. These core products are the Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Both the Transportation Plan and the TIP can be found on the MPO website (www.campo.in.gov) or paper copies are available from MPO staff.

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The MPO is responsible for maintaining a twenty-five year Transportation Plan for the metropolitan planning area. The Transportation Plan is the best source for understanding how the transportation system of the planning area will develop over the next quarter century as well as to gain an understanding of the policy direction of the Policy Board. While many of the other documents and information sources provided by the MPO provide detailed information about specific items and projects, it is the Transportation Plan that provides the overview and remains the core around which MPO activities revolve. The Transportation Plan is an important document for all stakeholders in the transportation system of the planning area to read.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The TIP is the document that shows the implementation of the Transportation Plan. The TIP covers a time period of four years and lists on a project specific basis the costs for each phase of all regionally significance projects.

MPO OUTREACH

The MPO uses the following methods of outreach to disseminate to and receive information from the public.

WORLD WIDE WEB

CAMPO maintains a presence on the World Wide Web at campo.in.gov. The CAMPO webpage provides the following to the public:

- A general overview of what an MPO is and what it does.
- A more specific overview of the Columbus Area MPO.
- Relevant contact information such as telephone numbers, email address, postal address, interactive map directions to the offices of CAMPO, and a sign up form for the CAMPO email distribution list
- Electronic versions of the Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.
- Project information for major projects to include the following:
 - Description of the project
 - Explanation of the project objectives
 - Graphics as required for project visualization
- Meeting date schedules for all public meetings of the MPO
- Links to relevant external websites.

INFORMATIONAL EMAILS

The CAMPO webpage has an email distribution list sign-up form. This gives all interested parties the ability to have their email address added to a list for receiving periodic emails from the MPO. Having this list enables MPO staff to actively send relevant information to citizens who are interested in the transportation planning process. Examples of emails sent include notification of upcoming meetings as well as planning activities of the MPO.

OPEN HOUSES AND WORKSHOPS

CAMPO conducts open houses and workshops for the public in order to gather feedback on planning activities and the resultant projects. These meetings feature maps and other forms of visualization to aid the public in gaining an overview of transportation projects and planning activity in their community. The feedback gathered as a part of these workshops is used to guide the results of the planning process and is an important part of garnering public support. Workshops are usually held once during the day and again after regular working hours to accommodate the different working schedules of participants.

Open houses and workshops are announced in the press and on the MPO webpage. Citizens interested in receiving notification of open houses or workshops may contact the MPO via any means listed in the “Contacting the MPO” section of this document.

STAFF PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

MPO staff is often invited to present to civic organizations and professional associations such as the Kiwanis, Rotary, Board of Realtors, etc. These sessions serve to familiarize people with the MPO, highlight the planning work and resultant projects of the MPO, and provide an opportunity to provide input and ask questions. The presentations are normally in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. Any civic group that would like to have MPO staff present to their group should feel free to contact MPO staff to make arrangements.

LEGAL ADS

The most widely circulated newspaper in the MPO planning area is The Republic. In keeping with the practices of Bartholomew County and City of Columbus Departments as well as to comply with Indiana Open Door laws, the MPO advertises meetings and proposed changes to the Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program via Legal Advertisement in The Republic. The Republic can be found on the World Wide Web at www.therepublic.com. Legal ads must be advertised in the paper a minimum of forty-eight hours prior to the meeting.

WRITTEN NOTIFICATION

Projects funded by the MPO usually change the built environment within which we live. Examples of this include but are not limited to street reconstruction projects, construction of transit stop locations, and trail construction projects. Using Geographic Information System technology, MPO staff is able to rapidly identify property owners living adjacent to planned projects and provide written notification to them of meetings related to the project. This technique was used to provide notification of the February 2006 Rocky Ford Rd Phase III information session organized by the City of Columbus Engineer. This technique was also used to provide notification of the Marr Rd Transit Transfer Point informational meeting. By proactively communicating with the public, misunderstandings and surprises are avoided.

VISUALIZATION

A picture is worth a thousand words. This well known phrase summarizes the importance of the use of visualization techniques in the transportation planning process. While we use many words to describe MPO projects both in the Transportation Plan and in the TIP, at the end of the day a picture is often the most effective means of helping people to rapidly understand a project. The MPO and its partners employ the following visualization techniques:

3D RENDERINGS

3D renderings are photo-realistic depictions of projects. These depictions are usually made from a combination of digital photos and basic CAD drawings. 3D renderings can be made very early in the planning process since they do not require highly accurate data.



3D Rendering of Marr Transit Transfer Point

2D OVERLAYS

Using orthophotography from the GIS and project specific details such as pavement marking plans, a two dimensional perspective of how a road project will look when completed can be made. The 2D overlay is printed using a plotter since the final printed product (much like the street it is depicting) is longer than it is wide. The orthophotography in the background helps people understand how the road will look and feel within the surrounding environment. It also effectively displays how the project will look once the grass and other vegetation has grown back.

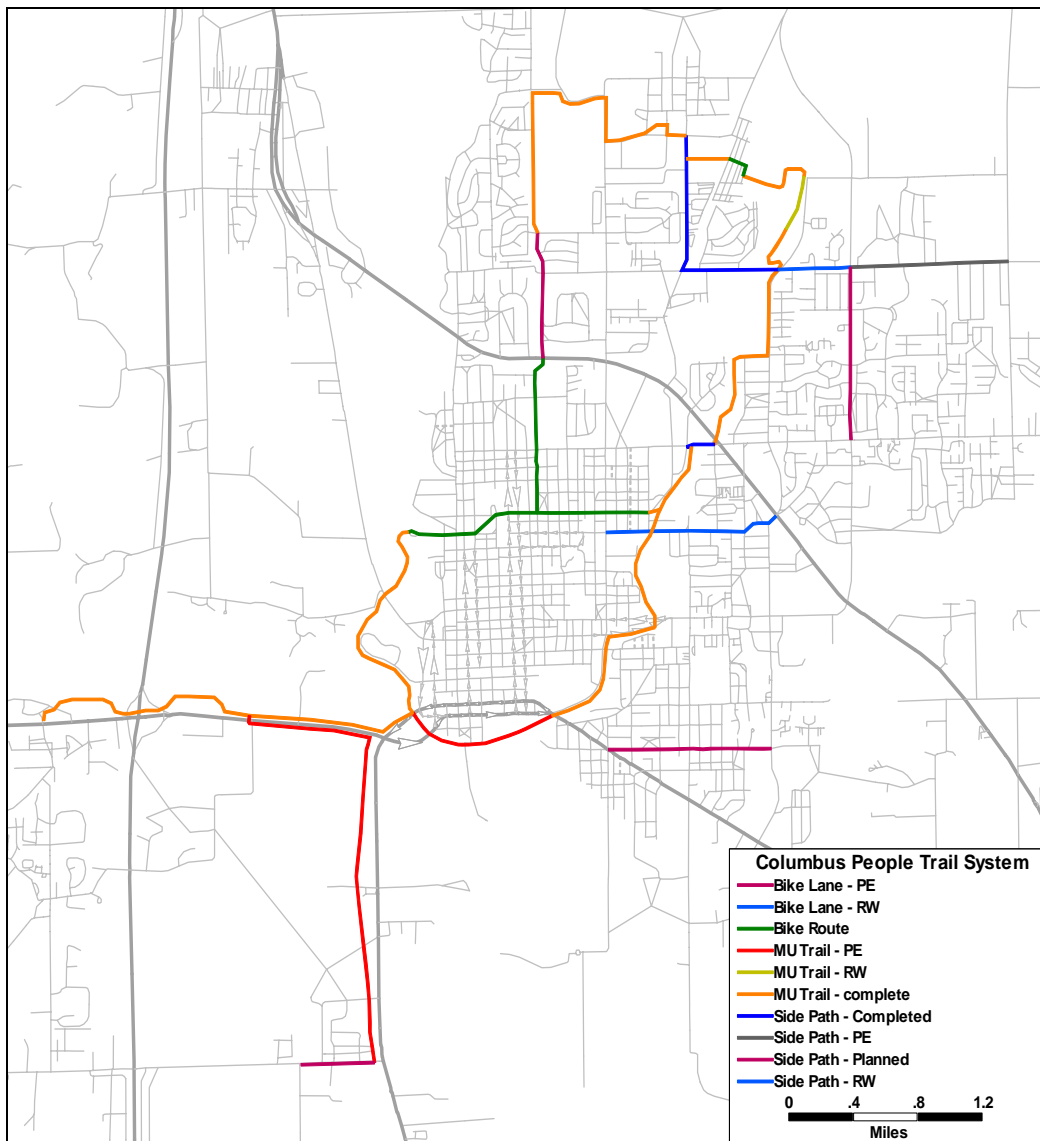
The following is a small portion of the Rocky Ford Rd Phase III Project, which shows how the road will look when construction is completed in early 2008. To produce this image, the Columbus City Engineer combined orthophotography with the pavement marking plans in order to create a display for the February 2006 Rocky Ford Rd information session held at the adjacent Columbus Community Church.



MAPS

Maps enable us to fit different pieces of the transportation puzzle into the whole. To understand why the Westenedge Dr project is important for the People Trails System, map showing where Westenedge fits into the system is important. Maps are generally static in nature, such as this map of the current and future People Trail System.

The following map was created for an information kiosk at the starting point of the annual Columbus Parks & Recreation Tour de Trails.



GIS

The MPO works closely with departments within Bartholomew County and the City of Columbus on Geographic Information Systems (GIS). GIS is a collection of computer hardware, software, and geographic data for capturing, managing, analyzing, and displaying all forms of geographically referenced information. The GIS can be online at www.bartholomewco.com and is available for free use by the public. Once you have opened this webpage, click on GIS in the lower left hand corner.

Currently the GIS does not provide much transportation related data, however new data layers currently under construction using MPO funds will change this.

MEETINGS

All public meetings are held at convenient locations for the public. The majority of MPO meetings are held in either Columbus City Hall or the Bartholomew County Building. Both of these locations are ADA compliant and can be easily reached via ColumBUS Transit.

Meeting locations and times are varied depending upon the issue. For example major updates to the Transportation Plan are presented at multiple locations and times in order to ensure that all citizens are afforded a chance to provide input.

MPO POLICY BOARD MEETINGS

The MPO Policy Board is the decision making body of the MPO. It is at the Policy Board meetings that issues are discussed and decisions are made. These decisions directly impact your community. Policy Board meetings are open to the public and include opportunities for citizens to ask questions as well as to comment on issues directly with the decision makers. The Policy Board meets approximately four times annually.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is a working group consisting of professional staff members from transportation stakeholders in the Columbus metropolitan planning area. The TAC meets approximately two times annually. TAC meetings are open to the public and represent another avenue for interested citizens to inform themselves and to provide feedback.

CITIZEN COMMITTEES

The MPO organizes citizen committees on an ad hoc basis to focus on specific planning issues. An example of this would be the 2006 Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee. This committee was charged with preparing the City of Columbus Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Members of committees include a mixture of elected officials, staff from various departments of the City of Columbus, members of interest groups, and interested citizens. Citizens interested in participating on future planning committees should contact MPO staff to let staff know what issues interest them. These meetings are also open to the public.

TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Transit Advisory Committee is a standing committee consisting of representatives of public transit, not-for-profit social services agencies that provide transportation services and users of both. The Transit Advisory Committee serves as a clearing house for issues related to public transportation as well as to increase the level of coordination amongst the member agencies. MPO Staff is a member and attendee of the Transit Advisory Committee.

The Transit Advisory Committee is one of the primary avenues for the MPO to collect information related to transportation needs of the traditionally underserved.

Members of the Transit Advisory Committee include:

- ColumBUS Transit
- The Senior Center of Bartholomew County
- Aging & Community Services
- United Way of Bartholomew County
- Columbus City Engineer
- Administrative Resources Association
- Developmental Services, Inc.
- Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation
- Human Rights Commission
- Quinco
- Indiana RTAP
- Foundation for Youth
- Columbus / Bartholomew Planning Department
- Columbus Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

SUMMARY

A continuous, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process can only be achieved via robust public participation. This plan has outlined the many avenues that the MPO uses to inform and receive input from all stakeholders in the transportation planning process. If you have managed to read this far into this document, you are obviously very interested in transportation issues. Please do not hesitate to take the next step and use what you have learned in this document to participate in the transportation planning process.